

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson (PA-15)
Testimony before the House Appropriations’ Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
Member Day Hearing on Appropriation Priorities for Fiscal Year 2022
Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and Members of the House Appropriations’ Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to share my Labor, HHS, and Education appropriation priorities for Fiscal Year 2022. For our country to continue to thrive, we must support programs aimed at improving lives and shaping futures. Additionally, we must remain dedicated to strengthening our workforce to stay competitive in the global economy. This Subcommittee is especially important in meeting those goals and has been affectionally referred to as “the People’s bill,” for a long time and with good reason.

Career and Technical Education:

As Co-Chair of the bipartisan House Career and Technical Education Caucus, I strongly support Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that provide learners of all ages with career-ready skills. From agriculture to marketing and manufacturing, CTE programs develop America’s most valuable resource—its people.

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is the primary source of federal funding for CTE. In our rapidly changing job market, CTE programs prepare students to be college and career ready and equip workers with the tools they need to succeed in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career fields.

During the 115th Congress, we unanimously passed the first major overhaul to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act since 2006, the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*. The bipartisan effort was signed into law by President Trump in July 2018. By modernizing the federal investment in CTE programs, we can connect more educators with industry stakeholders and close the nation’s skills gap.

Therefore, I respectfully request the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act be funded at the highest possible level for Fiscal Year 2022.

Community Services Block Grant:

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the only federal program with the explicit and overarching goal of reducing poverty, regardless of causality. CSBG Programs pursue these goals by providing critical funding to a network of local Community Action Agencies across the country and lends support to their locally driven, comprehensive approach to fighting poverty. More than 1,100 Community Action Agencies nationwide offer comprehensive services in 99 percent of U.S. counties to help at-risk populations achieve financial independence.

CSBG program funds help families and individuals achieve self-sufficiency, find and retain meaningful employment, attain an adequate education, make better use of available income, obtain adequate housing, and achieve greater participation in community affairs.

For these reasons, I respectfully request \$800 million for the Community Services Block Grant for Fiscal Year 2022.

Statewide Family Engagement Centers:

The Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program provides much-needed technical assistance and partnership development to states and local education agencies to foster meaningful engagement with families to further their children's academic and developmental progress. SFECs also provide vital direct services to improve collaboration of engagement between children, parents, teachers, school leaders, counselors, administrators, and other school personnel.

The SFEC program embarked on its inaugural year of an initial five-year grant cycle after receiving \$10 million in FY18 resulting in thirteen states establishing SFECs. The program received a \$2.5 million increase in FY21, which will result in more centers being established. Despite these positive advancements, millions of K-12 students and their families are unable to benefit from enhanced engagement supports and services provided by SFECs due to funding limitation.

Additional investments in SFECs and family engagement is important to ensure families are meaningfully supported and engaged in the education of their children, so that students are fully prepared for higher education, the workforce, and career opportunities in the 21st century.

For these reasons, I respectfully request at least \$20 million for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers Grant Program for Fiscal Year 2022.

Assistive Technology Act Programs:

The Assistive Technology (AT) Act empowers a wide array of individuals experiencing life changing disease and disability the ability to utilize technology to be active participants in their communities. For example, state-based AT programs provide children with Autism, veterans injured in Afghanistan, individuals diagnosed with debilitating cancer, and adults with cerebral palsy, with assistive technology needed to continue attending school, entering the workforce, staying gainfully employed, or residing in an independent setting.

All 50 states, the four U.S. territories, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico receive formula grant funding under the AT Act. These 56 grantees are required to carry out a continuum of specified state level and state leadership activities that increase the access to and acquisition of assistive technology, including state financing activities, device reutilization, device loan/borrowing and device demonstration services. These services are available for persons with all types of disabilities, all ages, in all environments.

In FY18, State AT Programs leveraged more than \$23 million from federal, state, local, and private sources. If the committee would include full funding for AT Act Programs for FY22, it would be well spent and would generate matching investment from states and the private sector.

For these reasons, I respectfully request full funding for the Assistive Technology Act programs in Fiscal Year 2022.

Jefferson County-DuBois Area Vocational-Technical School Farm to Refrigerator Training Facility Project:

Jefferson County-DuBois Area Vocational-Technical School (Jeff Tech), located in Jefferson County, Pennsylvania, is a comprehensive career and technical education center that provides educational experiences, credentials, and training for individuals, so they can succeed in high-demand careers upon graduation.

Throughout the North Central Workforce Development Area in Pennsylvania, there is a growing need to have qualified and trained butchers and meat-cutters. To address these shortfalls, Jeff Tech created a stakeholder group, which has fifteen members throughout the region. COVID-19 only amplified the need to fill these positions, with concerns of the impact to the national food supply chain.

Should the committee look favorably upon this project, it will consist of constructing a training facility that will provide the resources and skill development needed to teach individuals how to process various types of meat. This will allow them to be placed into high-wage, family-sustaining jobs, while also providing a tremendous and lasting boost to the local economy, local farmers, and the meat processing industry.

For these several reasons, I respectfully request \$1,500,000 from the Training and Employment Services Account to complete this community project.

Centre Volunteers in Medicine Clinic Construction Project:

Centre Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM), located in Centre County, Pennsylvania, is a community health resource center providing medical and dental care, case management, and medication assistance to those without health insurance and whose household income is 250 percent or lower of the Federal Poverty Level. Physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, social workers, and other licensed clinicians volunteer their time to provide care to CVIM's patients. CVIM has outgrown its facility and has recently purchased a new building with the intent of renovating the facility to provide over 10,000 square feet of medical space.

According to the 2021 County Health Rankings, seven percent, or approximately 11,400 people in Centre County, do not have health insurance. CVIM offers a health care safety net and plays a key role in filling coverage gaps and ensures that health care is accessible and affordable for those who are uninsured or have high-deductible or high cost-sharing plans that leave them unable to access care.

Should the committee look favorably upon this project, CVIM will be able to renovate the recently purchased facility to provide exam rooms, counseling rooms, dental operatories, and offices.

For these reasons, I respectfully request \$1,060,912 from the Health Resources and Services Administration account to complete this worthwhile community project.

Rural Pennsylvania Mental and Substance Abuse Initiative:

Rural Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of drug addiction, including the use of opioids, in the Commonwealth resulting in loss of loved ones, financial distress, and depleting economic opportunities.

The Rural Pennsylvania Mental and Substance Abuse Initiative will expose Rural PA to the latest techniques available in the treatment and prevention of mental health issues particularly drug or alcohol abuse. The initiative will examine emerging and best practices and locate appropriate resources, including reviewing and providing interventions on treating substance misuse and substance use disorders in youth with serious emotional disturbances; identifying knowledge gaps and implementation challenges, assessing people in the justice system who have co-occurring mental and substance use disorders, and increasing awareness of the risks associated with prescription opioid use and misuse, as well as to educate patients who are prescribed opioids for pain about the risks and to provide resources on methods for alternative pain management.

A study on substance abuse in rural Pennsylvania by the Center for Rural PA indicated brief outpatient treatments appear to significantly decrease costs to the individual and to society. Additionally, compared to many other types of health care interventions, alcohol and drug abuse treatments are significantly less expensive than most medical procedures.

For these reasons, I respectfully request \$1,017,000 from the Health Surveillance and Program Support Account to complete this worthwhile community project.

Renovation and Expansion of St. Francis University's School of Health Sciences and Education Project:

St. Francis University, based in Loretto, Pennsylvania, offers 50 programs through three schools, including the Health Sciences and Education School. The University enrolls approximately 900 students in nursing, nurse practitioner, exercise physiology, physician assistant sciences, physical therapy, occupational therapy, public health, and social work and graduates nearly 200 students per year in these fields.

As the Baby Boom Generation continues to retire and as the field of medicine advances to help people better manage chronic conditions and live longer, these combinations of factors create challenges to adequately staff the healthcare sector. Estimates suggest that demand for healthcare workers will outpace supply by 2025. This problem is exacerbated in states with a heavy rural population, such as Pennsylvania.

To address some of these concerns, it has been proposed to renovate the University's health science facilities, replacing outdated learning spaces and technology with state-of-the-art classrooms and laboratories. Updating the University's infrastructure will ensure that health science students continue to receive the highest-level science and technology instruction—factors that also help maintain and build a skilled and creative labor force that spurs innovation.

For these reasons, I respectfully request \$500,000 from the Health Resources and Services Administration account to complete this worthwhile community project.

Safe Patient Handling: Overhead Lift Purchase and Installation Project:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three adults in the United States is overweight, and the prevalence of obesity has increased significantly over the last several decades. In the health care setting, mobilizing and transferring patients who are disabled, overweight, or obese is not only challenging but also dangerous.

At UPMC Northwest, which is based out of Seneca, Pennsylvania, patient handling has been the second leading cause of employee injury over the last 12 months. If awarded, the funding for this project will be used to outfit ten (10) patient rooms with overhead lifts that would assist the staff to safely reposition a patient in bed or to assist in transferring the patient to a chair or wheelchair safely and with dignity. In addition, this funding will assist in reducing musculoskeletal injuries related to patient moving and transferring patients.

With the use of safe patient handling equipment, such as the overhead lifts, staff would be able to safely reposition patients, transfer patients to carts for testing, or transfer patients to a chair to prevent complications of bed rest and immobility.

Therefore, I respectfully request \$100,000 from the Health Resources and Services Administration Account to complete this community project.

Again, thank you to Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and Members of this Subcommittee for allowing me to express my priorities for Fiscal Year 2022. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to working together on these and other issues.